

"Maria Remboulis Weidmark's Notes from Region 6 One-Stop Conference"

R6 One-Stop Conference (August 20-22, 2002)

Opening Remarks by

Mason Bishop, Deputy Assistant Secretary/ETA

The Deputy Assistant Secretary utilized his time to discuss recent developments and initiatives that would be of interest to the audience, which exceeded 1000 attendees. Mr. Bishop concentrated his remarks, first on the new Trade Act legislation, and then on WIA reauthorization 'policy guidelines' before taking a limited number of questions from the audience.

With respect to trade, Mr. Bishop began by stating that industries are becoming more technologically based, a situation expected to continue. Therefore, attached to the new trade legislation is an expansion of Trade Act benefits (from \$400M to \$1.2B) to further strengthen trade-related programs. According to the Deputy Assistant Secretary, USDOL has 2 responsibilities regarding the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA):

- 1) Administer the new Act, which allows the President to make more expeditious decisions about trade-related issues. (The new TAA integrates TAA and NAFTA-TAA so that it's just one 'Trade Program' for workers; the new program is authorized through 2007 and expands eligibility to secondary workers, e.g., suppliers);
- 2) Regulatory responsibility on international child labor laws.

Furthermore, in the past, USDOL would have to certify trade applications within 60 days; the new law requires the certification *within 40 days*. There's also an increased cap on training from \$110M to \$220M. (Mr. Bishop added here that Idaho had to apply for a National Emergency Grant (NEG) because they ran out of funds.) Health insurance assistance will also now be allowable under the law (i.e., a health care tax credit for workers).

The Deputy Assistant Secretary described two new NEG programs: one for administration to implement the new health care provisions; and another to assist workers with health care-related issues.

With respect to WIA Reauthorization, Mr. Bishop began by stating that WIA created programs (adult, dislocated worker, and youth), as well as an infrastructure for the One-Stop system. Ideally, however, there should have been separate legislation for the One-Stop infrastructure because other partner programs have unfortunately perceived WIA as "a DOL program," with their participation following suit. According to the Deputy Assistant Secretary, this was an inherent flaw with WIA. However, the upcoming reauthorization is an opportunity to push the overall One-Stop agenda forward (it's expected that the reauthorization bill will be

transmitted to Congress by January 2003). In terms of guiding principles for the development of policy, Mr. Bishop offered the following six items:

1. **The fundamental premise behind the One-Stop system is right on target;**
2. **We must be more responsive to business and the employer community** (noting that it's the workers who ultimately benefit from meeting employer needs and "it means more than 51% of WIBs are business representatives");
3. **We must better clarify federal, state and local roles.** The federal role is one of leadership and we should promote workforce development as part of states' economic development strategies. The governance structure for the workforce investment system must also be simplified;
4. **There must be improved program performance and accountability.** (Core performance measures are expected this fall and as part of the 2004 budget; *there are expected to be common measures for many workforce development programs (which will be simplified)*. Note: these aren't system-wide measures per se, but *common* measures.) Mr. Bishop also talked about customer satisfaction, noting that the numbers don't tell us a lot at the federal level, and adding that, when he worked for the State of Utah, their customer satisfaction surveys didn't tell them what was 'good' or 'not good' about service delivery. So the question of the federal role regarding customer satisfaction was discussed, although not completely clarified;
5. **There should be more individualized opportunities for training.** Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) are good in that they promote choice, but we should expand on that customer choice; and
6. **We need a strategic vision for youth.** Although Mr. Bishop noted "we're not sure we have the answer," he stated that the Department is nonetheless undertaking an aggressive effort, including the sponsorship of youth forums. (Key policy questions include, for instance, how Perkins and WIA youth dollars can work more effectively together.) Part of the strategic vision for youth would also include the opportunity for young people to get credentials and skill-related certificates through community colleges or through some other vehicle. *Mr. Bishop called this a "homeland security issue,"* stating that we have to prepare young people for the jobs we need in this country; 80% of the jobs in the future will require post-secondary education or some form of credential/skill-related standard.

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